

Remembering

I'm in my thirties, which isn't that old for some. I can talk about how I remember when a gasoline price of \$1.25 would cause rioting in the streets, where today it would cause dancing in them, but others could top a story like that easily. In the world of home computers however, I am officially an old fart. I've been alive longer than that first Altair, which is more or less the first computer buyable by someone who was not a business, college, government, or military institution, so I think that qualifies. Others might talk about their experiences with room-filling machines or teletypes, but their experiences with home machines wouldn't be all that different. In any case, I can look back through the rose-colored glasses of nostalgia with the best of them, and talk like an old guy in a rocking chair about how things are different today than they were back in the "good old days."

I remember when a computer could be ready to go within a second of hitting the power switch. Of course that was back when a whole operating system wasn't much more than a set of disk commands and making sure hitting a key made the corresponding letter appear on a cathode-ray tube.

I remember when Amigas gave people the most bang for their buck in terms of performance versus price, in both hardware and software, relative to PC and Macintosh. Now, with creative shopping and finding enough items with rebates attached, it might be possible to piece together a medium-duty PC and get five bucks back for doing it. (Okay, that's an exaggeration,

but don't worry, there will probably be more.)

I remember the PC users berated the Amiga folk, claiming their systems weren't "serious" computers, and really only good for games, due to their low cost and high performance ratio. Now, the PC is the primary game platform, and if you want to be a truly "serious" gamer, you'd better pay out the ass for the highest-end system available. Apparently, games became very serious business between then and now.

I remember the mid-nineties, when only the geeks were a big part of the phenomenon known as the internet, talking down to the "common people" with AOL addresses, and generally being asses. Now, people are stoned to death if they don't have internet access, and laughed at if they can't download a full-length movie in ten minutes. The more things change, the more they stay the same, because there's even more talking down to people and being asses in general.

I remember when computers were wonderfully large, expandable, and ugly boxes. Blame Apple for the majority of the style revolution. They may not have led every style trend in the computer or electronics world, but there's probably fewer Apple-originated case designs that weren't copied by others than ones that came from somewhere else.

I remember when computers were islands unto themselves. You had all the files and software you needed in one place (or on a stack of disks next to that place), the outside world didn't really apply, and the only way your computer contracted an ailment was

from a floppy disk obtained by shady means. It's near-impossible to own a computer without internet as an inextricable part of its use anymore. Operating systems and software reference the net routinely for information or updates or registration. We're getting closer to the conceptual idea that home computers will be little more than terminals, and software and storage come from the vast repository that is the net. We're also closer to constantly having our computers infected, spy-wared, and used remotely without our knowledge for sinister purposes — if we were running Windows, anyway.

I remember when people bought computers they enjoyed, like Amigas. There was a generation of technogeeks who used computers for creative pursuits, such as art, music, sound, video, programming, and more. That creative culture is still there, but many of the people have moved on, either to greener pastures or to the least objectionable flavor of Linux. Maybe some things are a little too easy today in our digital culture, and computers seem less a creative medium, and more a thing for you to access the internet and organise and edit your digital photos and home videos. Of course it may just be more likely I'm just old (in computer relative terms) and looking back at all the fun I had then, which is not as easy to recapture today, regardless of all the extra software, bandwidth and processing power. Just like that X-Box 360 is not an Atari, nothing is quite what an Amiga was.

...by Eric W. Schwartz
AmiTech-Dayton Gazette
January 2006

AmiKit Update Package

AmiKit is the compilation of the best Amiga (free/shareware) programs around. To be brief, AmiKit is all you need if you want to experience a high-end Classic Amiga system. It contains many expansions and add-ons (more than 20.000 files are included in AmiKit!) that turn the default AmigaOS installation into a completely renewed and fresh environment. This pre-configured package is designed for immediate use.

New Software Included in the 1.04 update:

- *"STFax 4" is a multi-purpose voice/fax/data communications package. It's is a phone, answer-machine, facsimile, mini-BBS and communications*

server. STFax 4 offers scalability, adapting to the home user needing a simple answer/fax machine replacement, through to a company requiring automated fax and voice message distribution across a small network of computers. Enhanced flexibility also enables a travelling businessman to install onto his notebook, connect his GSM phone and send/receive a fax, receive/reply/send an SMS message, write/send/receive email or even remotely access the local STFax 4, situated within the office. Author: Simone Tellini.

- *"DigiConverter" is used to convert numbers between decimal, hexadecimal, binary, floating point. You can also type in letters and see their ASCII-codes or type numbers and see characters. Author: Daniel Westerberg.*

AmigaMCCC News

MCCC

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March Calendar

March 13 — Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:00 pm — Grand Prairie Public Library
901 Conover Drive, Grand Prairie

March 13 — MCCC Board of Director's Meeting
Approx. 9:15 pm — Location TBD

March 25 — Newsletter Deadline — 7:00 am

- *"GuardAmy" is extremely useful if you want to know which of your favourite websites have been changed since your last visit without a need to check them all again manually. Author: Diego 'dx0' de Felice.*
- *"Tree" lists the directory structure in a tree-form. You can use it within Directory Opus Magellan II, hold down the right mouse button over a directory and select "Show Tree". Note that scanning through a deep directory structure may take some time before the result is displayed. Author: Frank Brandis.*
- *"KingCON" patch updates the well-known but old KingCON 1.3 handler to version 1.7. Besides many various fixes, this CON replacement now supports the mouse wheel! Author: Mikolaj Calusinski*

...and much more, see the downloads page!